

went on to complete basic training in Fort Sill, OK. He was stationed at Fort Carson, CO, and assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. He deployed to Iraq in 2008.

Stephen, or Bud, as his mom called him, or Zap, as his friends called him—he had lots of names—is survived by his parents, Gary and Chris, and his sister, Ashley, and a very close friend, also named Chris, who lived with the Zapasniks since he was 15 years old, whom Stephen considered to be his brother.

Stephen's mother described his determination to enter the Army by losing over 90 pounds to get in. He was grossly overweight, but he made that sacrifice. She said she barely recognized him after basic training because he lost even more weight at that time.

His friends and fellow soldiers affectionately nicknamed him "Zap," describing him as a jokester who would happily make fun of himself if anyone needed to be cheered up. Zap would create short skits and record them on his camera in order to share them with anyone who would watch. After the accident, many of his fellow soldiers from his battalion got together and watched the movies he had made, staying up throughout the night, telling stories about him and laughing—exactly what Zap would have wanted them to do. Stephen loved video games, particularly his flight simulator game. He wanted to become a pilot someday.

His colleagues described Stephen as a fantastic shot, always a qualifying expert in every weapon. Chris Hamil said his brother volunteered to man the machine gun on top of his humvee. As we all know, and certainly the occupant of the Chair knows, that is one of the most exposed positions a person can take. He was willing to do that.

In his tribute comments, Staff Sergeant Barry summed Stephen up by saying:

Zap would give the shirt off his back or the last dollar in his pocket to anyone that needed it.

A comment from a friend:

My family will be forever grateful for young men like Stephen who risk themselves to provide protection and security to this great country of ours . . .

A spouse stationed at Fort Carson wrote:

Zap was one of my husband's soldiers and friends. Zap left an impression on our lives that we will never forget. He would come to my house and have the best manners and be so respectful . . . Zap always cared about others before himself, even offering to babysit my three children so that my husband and I could have a date right before he deployed. He left an impression on our lives that will never be forgotten and most of all my son loved him dearly . . . He was a hero in so many ways and he was a respected soldier always giving 100 percent.

His mom Chris wrote:

I am so proud of my son and what he accomplished as a member of the military family. I would not take back the man he had become or the hero he will always be for any-

thing, even if I could have him beside me again. He was an outstanding young man and he will live forever in my heart and soul.

Stephen was committed to what he felt he was called to do and fully understood the sacrifice he would be making by serving his country in Iraq. All those guys and gals over there know the risk they are under. They are willing to do that.

Before Stephen left for Iraq, he said:

Mom, if I ever don't come back, you know I will always be with you, and I will be with Jesus, and I will be fine.

Stephen had a strong faith in God, a strong commitment to his family and his friends, and a calling to protect our Nation by his service in the Army.

His mom said:

I know that he is perfectly safe and spending Christmas up there with Jesus.

Keep this in mind: This happened late on Christmas Eve.

She also expressed Stephen's pride to serve in the Army and to serve our country by fighting terrorism. She told me just a few minutes ago what a man he had become, and she thanked the U.S. Army for doing for him what was done for him.

The pride is now in Stephen, this young Oklahoman who enthusiastically joined the military at age 17 and was willing to lose 90 pounds in order to serve his country. He sacrificed his life in order to provide us with the precious freedoms we enjoy each day. His life embodies what it means to be a hero.

We remember you today, Stephen, your sense of humor, your commitment to your family and to the Lord.

Having just talked with his mother, she reaffirmed how strong Stephen was in his love for Jesus. I think we can say today—and we understand this—as fleeting as life is, this wink of time we are here—and I talked with Chris about this—that this today is not saying goodbye to Stephen, it is saying we will see you later. Thanks for your job well done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the issue of the economy and how we address the question of economic stimulus in the context of what is a very severe slowdown, recession, and in the context of what is an extraordinary situation relative to our deficits.

Just yesterday, the Congressional Budget Office reported that the deficit this year will be \$1.2 trillion. That is a number which most of us cannot even fathom. To try to put it in context, that size of deficit has not occurred in this country, if you calculate it as a percentage of GDP, since World War II. It is a deficit that is extraordinarily large. A deficit means we are running up debt our children are going to have to pay for. So it has a real effect on the

next generation and generations after that and their ability to be prosperous.

Not only does CBO tell us the deficit is going to be \$1.2 trillion, but they also tell us that with the stimulus package that is being proposed—and the package that is being talked about is in the range of \$700 billion to \$800 billion, and when you throw that spending on top of the deficit, we are talking about a deficit which will be closing in on \$2 trillion, which is about 11 percent of GDP. That will be almost four times larger than the largest deficit we have run since World War II. There are a lot of things causing this, of course, and most of them are tied to the economic slowdown. The economic slowdown is severe, but as we try to mute and lessen the impact of that slowdown on working Americans and on everyday Americans, we have to be careful that we don't do things which aggravate significantly in the outyears this country's fiscal strength and our children's ability to have a high quality of life.

I have said on numerous occasions that I believe President-elect Obama is on the right track relative to bringing forward a very robust and aggressive stimulus package. But what is key to determining whether that package is a good package or a marginal package is the policy that underlies it. It is not the numbers so much as it is the policy.

I believe there are a few signposts which we should follow as we develop such a package. The first is that we not unduly aggravate this long-term debt situation which we have as a country.

We know we are facing a fiscal tsunami as a nation. The baby boom generation is about to be into full retirement. During the term of this Presidency, should the President be re-elected, the baby boom generation will be very close to full retirement. That will mean we will have doubled the number of people in retirement in this country, and the cost of maintaining those retirees will put a massive burden on the backs of this tax generation but especially the next generation. We are talking \$60 trillion of unfunded liability that is coming at us. That is debt coming at us. That doesn't count the debt we are putting on the books today to deal with this economic slowdown.

So what is very critical as we address trying to get the economy going by using a stimulus package is we have to be very careful that we put in place programmatic activity that doesn't add to the long-term debt of the Nation, that are one-time items that will basically retract and no longer be part of the deficit function or add to the deficit function in the outyears.

The TARP program is a good example. The TARP program was a program we put in place to try to stabilize the financial institutions of this country, and it has. That program basically

used investment versus spending relative to tax dollars. We purchased preferred stock in a series of financial institutions across this country. That preferred stock, the purchasing of it, has helped to stabilize those financial institutions and the financial system of the Nation. The purchase of that preferred stock creates a significant jump in the deficit for next year. Depending on how many of the dollars we end up using of the TARP, it could be \$400 billion or \$500 billion. But in the outyears, we are going to get that money back because we are buying assets. In fact, we may get it back with interest—or we will get it back with interest and make a little money for the taxpayers, which would be good. They deserve to make a little money off that initiative.

That type of investment is a one-time event which may aggravate the deficit in the short run but does not aggravate the deficit in the long run. That is the type of initiative we need to look at.

In the area—and this is being talked about a lot—of the Federal Government going out and just spending money, not investing money that comes back in assets to us, we have to take the same approach: that we are basically going to put the dollars of the stimulus package into initiatives which will make our Nation more competitive and more productive in the outyears so that we get more tax revenues, hopefully, but at least have more jobs created in this country as we compete in the worldwide economy. Thus, as we invest in infrastructure, which will be a large part of this stimulus package, it is absolutely critical that we have entry-level tests to be sure that the infrastructure we are investing in is infrastructure which is going to produce an outyear return to us beyond the dollars that are put into them.

Now, we all love things such as beautifying Main Street or putting in running tracks. These are all things people love to do, and some people even love to build halls of fame to this issue or that issue. But that is not the type of infrastructure investment which is going to help us be more competitive and create more jobs, and the bottom line is to create more jobs. What we want to do is invest in what is going to create more jobs and make us more competitive in the global economy: roads, bridges, high-speed broadband in areas that aren't quite as dense population-wise to make it affordable in the commercial sense; IT, and especially in these quasi-public areas, such as health care, where it will give us a return on our investment; the military—and we have the chairman of the Armed Services Committee sitting in the Chair—we have to obviously retool our military. These are investments which give us a long-term return.

So I hope as we get to the stimulus package and we send this money out to the States, primarily—I suspect that is

where it is going to go, States and communities—there will be some entry-level tests they have to meet before they can spend the money so that we get a return on those dollars in the way of making our Nation more competitive and more productive. I would hate to see us just give it to the States with very little limitation on how they spend it because a lot of the money will, unfortunately, be wasted.

I know in my State every community is pulling together their wish lists, and I have seen things like putting in alarm systems in dorms. You know, maybe that is a good idea, but it is not the responsibility of the Federal Government to do that. Our responsibility would be to replace a bridge or build a bridge that is a bottleneck from the standpoint of transportation or put broadband into a region of the State which couldn't get it otherwise because of density issues or give our health communities a better way to do their IT so they are more efficient. So we do need these tests.

In addition, everything needs a hard sunset. Everything in this stimulus package needs a hard sunset so that when we get to the end of this recession, which we are going to get to because we are inherently a resilient nation, we don't continue these programs into the future. By hard sunset my view would be that for a program to continue under this it would have to have a two-thirds vote.

Another major initiative in the stimulus package, it appears, will be tax initiatives. I respect, and first off I admire, the energy and the focus of the Obama team on this issue. I think he has put together an extraordinarily talented group of people in many areas but especially in the fiscal area—with Secretary-designate Gardener and Larry Summers and Paul Volcker—and it is my view that as we look at the tax part of this component—and I understand it is going to be fairly big—it should be again focused on where we create jobs because this is the issue: How are we going to create more jobs? It is pretty obvious that in our economy jobs aren't created by big business or by government. Jobs are created by individual entrepreneurs who go out and start something small and it builds. So the majority of the tax initiatives, in my opinion, should be focused on job creation and assisting people who are willing to take risks in the small business community.

There is a lot of discussion about a major employment tax credit; that if you hire people, you get a credit for employment. I tend to think that is probably not going to generate a whole lot of economic activity. If somebody is going to hire someone, they are going to hire them. And they will take advantage of it, obviously, but the odds of people actually adding people because they have a credit for adding people is slim, I suspect. It is not human nature to do that, even for a tax credit. I suspect it will just be money

put out the door and not produce much in the way of results. We have a pretty good and pretty recent example of how this works in the area of tax policy because we did a stimulus package which was keyed off a tax rebate last spring, and \$80 billion of a \$160 billion package was a tax rebate and it generated virtually no greater consumption. So there are some pretty good statistics which have shown consumption was not increased significantly at all by that tax rebate initiative. So a tax rebate approach is probably not going to get you a lot in the area of the big bang for the buck.

We want to come out of this slowdown a stronger, more productive nation by making capital investments and using tax policy to generate those investments so we can compete better in the world economy. I would hope that would be the approach that is taken.

There is another proposal which addresses the issue of States, and this one is the most problematic of all the initiatives in the stimulus package for me. There are a lot of States that have been fiscally responsible and actually have surpluses, and some States have said they do not even need this sort of support. There are other States with revenues that have dropped precipitously because of this economic slowdown which they didn't have any control over, and they have a legitimate claim. They are in dire straits. There are other States, however, that have simply during the recession spent a lot of money which was out of proportion with what good fiscal policy allows. So I would hope that as we are talking about assisting States—and I understand it is probably going to come in through the FMAP for the Medicaid Programs—that we have some conditionality that says if the State's financial distress is caused by a drop in revenues, then we will be supportive. But if the financial distress is caused by the fact they have simply been excessive in their programmatic activity, beyond profligate—profligate is probably too strong a term—but excessive in their programmatic activities, beyond what is reasonable in these slow times, then we should not be underwriting that sort of activity that is inappropriate from the standpoint of fiscal restraint. We should rather be focused on assisting States that have seen a significant drop in their revenue. It is difficult to do, but I believe it can be done, and I believe it should be done.

It is obvious we need a robust stimulus package right now, and it is very obvious we need to have it sooner rather than later. From my standpoint, as a member of the Republican Party, which is in opposition here arguably, I want to work with the other side of the aisle and with the President-elect to accomplish it because I don't think we can afford partisan politics at this time. We need to govern. These issues are so huge and are going to have such

a devastating impact on our Nation if they are not aggressively and boldly addressed that we can't afford this to be a party-line event. We need to have cooperation. We have a template for that. When we took up the TARP bill, which was an extraordinary piece of legislation, it was done because we recognized the crisis was upon us and action had to be taken, and it was done in a totally bipartisan and, I thought, a very effective way, and that is a good template for moving forward.

So I just lay these ideas out as an approach to take, and I say, from my standpoint, to the extent I can participate—and I hope I can—I am willing to listen to any ideas, and I want to see us make progress. I want to see it be prompt because in this area, it is absolutely critical for the President-elect to succeed for the Nation's good.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREE- MENT—MODIFICATION TO AP- POINTMENTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order of January 6 with respect to the announcement of Members appointed to be Senate tellers for the joint session today be modified to reflect that Senator SCHUMER will replace Senator FEINSTEIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUPPORTING THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY BILL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to follow on the comments of my friend from New Hampshire, Senator GREGG. Although he and I may disagree on some political issues, and we do, the fact is, many of the things he just said I agree with completely. I think there is a sense among Members of Congress that we are facing an extraordinary set of circumstances in America today. The Presiding Officer, from the State of Michigan, probably has endured more economic bad news than almost any of us. If I am not mistaken, one out of every eight people in his State is currently on food stamps, and it is an indication of how his economy is struggling.

With regard to the economies of some of the other States, when you look across the United States, the headlines are sobering. We have been told repeatedly about the loss of jobs. Look at some of the most recent headlines: DHL cuts 9,500 U.S. jobs; Chrysler to lay off 2,400 in Fenton, MO; AT&T announcing job cuts; Sprint losing jobs; Stanley Works, GM, Office Depot—the list goes on and on.

The fact is, yesterday 22,000 Americans lost their jobs. If the latest projections are true, 22,000 more Americans will lose their jobs today, and 22,000 more Americans will lose their

jobs tomorrow. That is the state of the economy. Instead of creating employment, we are losing jobs at a pace which soberes all of us.

As a student of history, I understand the Great Depression that Franklin Roosevelt inherited as he became President in March of 1933 was much deeper and dangerous and wider in scope. But when you look at what we face today, that is the only historical analogy we can point to in recent memory that even is close to what we are facing.

Over 9,000 American families lost their homes to foreclosure yesterday, more than 9,000 families will lose their homes today, and another 9,000 the day after and every day that succeeds. The reason, of course, is that we have so many bad mortgages—the subprime mortgages. Many people were misled into signing up for mortgages they couldn't afford, and now, as the terms reset and come due, families can't keep up with them and are losing homes.

It is not just a problem for that person who lives down the street, the family who had to move out; it is your problem too. In my hometown of Springfield, IL, a small Midwestern town, with relatively stable real estate values, my home is diminished in value because of the foreclosures that are occurring in our community and the general state of the economy so even families dutifully making their mortgage payments are falling behind because their core assets, such as the value of their home, are diminishing.

Every day this economic crisis deepens and claims more victims. Families who have worked so hard for so many years are finding it difficult to maintain even the most basic standards of the middle class. This is the worst economic time our Nation has seen since the Great Depression 75 years ago. We can observe it, lament it, give our speeches about it or we can do something. This morning, President-elect Barack Obama, my former Illinois Senate colleague, gave a speech at George Mason University, right outside Washington, DC, in Fairfax, VA. He talked about what we are facing and what we need to do about it. He said:

... equally certain are the consequences of doing little or nothing at all, for that will lead to an even greater deficit of jobs, incomes, and confidence in the economy.

President-elect Obama said:

That is why we need to act boldly and act now to reverse these cycles. That's why we need to put money in the pockets of the American people, create new jobs, and invest in our future. That's why we need to restart the flow of credit and restore the rules of the road that will ensure a crisis like this never happens again.

That work begins with a plan, a plan that he says he is confident “will save or create at least 3 million jobs over the next few years.” He talks about the priorities we need to invest in, such as energy and education, health care and new infrastructure, that are necessary to keep us strong and competitive in the 21st century.

Yesterday, the designate for the new Secretary of Energy, Dr. Steven Chu, came to my office. He is a man who is widely respected for his academic expertise and knowledge of energy issues. He finds it a little challenging and daunting, as he thinks about facing Members of Congress and the massive level of employment of personnel at his Department, but he talked in terms of energy, and he said it is ironic we have reached a point in history that the United States is not on the cutting edge of developing new forms of energy technology. The windmills we are constructing across America are, by and large, built or designed in Europe. Nuclear energy we have not touched for some 20 years in this country and have ceded the research to other countries.

There are areas where we need to invest in America. As President-elect Obama said this morning at George Mason University, this energy investment is important for our future to move toward energy independence.

President-elect Obama in a few days will take the oath of office not far from here and then will count on Congress to move quickly to pass the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan. He is urging we do it boldly and swiftly and that we bring transparency and openness to the process so the American people see their money is being well spent on investments in America's future—investments when it comes to education and energy and health care; investments that will bring down the cost of health care for many American families who are struggling today, not to mention those who have no health protection whatsoever.

He also calls on us to stabilize and repair our financial system on which we all depend. I think we know what we are talking about. When a man named Bernard Madoff can, over the span of 10 or 20 years, lure investors into what has turned out to be a Ponzi scheme, causing many of them to lose millions of dollars, and his wrongdoing goes unnoticed by major regulatory agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission, it is clear more has to be done.

When the ratings agencies, major ratings agencies that set the standards for whether a company is doing well basically ignore their responsibility and fail to make accurate reports, everyone loses as a result of it.

President-elect Obama said in closing today:

It is time to set a new course for this economy, and that change must begin now. We should have an open and honest discussion about this recovery plan in the days ahead, but I urge Congress to move as quickly as possible on behalf of the American people. For every day we wait or point fingers or drag our feet, more Americans will lose their jobs. More families will lose their savings. More dreams will be deferred and denied. And our Nation will sink deeper into a crisis that, at some point, we may not be able to reverse.

I hope what I am about to say is a reminder to all of us of the responsibility